



MONTANA ADVOCACY PROGRAM, INC.

The Civil Rights Protection & Advocacy System for the State of Montana

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January 30, 2007

Joint Appropriations Subcommittee for Long Range Planning
The Hon. Rep. David Kasten, Chair

RE: STEP proposal

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

The attached letters were written by forensic patients at the Montana State Hospital and entrusted to the Montana Advocacy Program for delivery to you.

Thank you for allowing these to become part of the record of your deliberations on the STEP proposal.

Yours truly,

Anita Roessmann

January 16, 2007

Joint Appropriations Subcommittee for Health and Human Services
Rep. Edith Clark, Chair

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

We the undersigned Forensic patients, would like to add our voice of opposition to
Senate Bill 149 that has articulated in the letters sent to you by our fellow patients.

^{HEEM}
Michael J. Cook
James P. Pata

D. J. Wise

Jim Hough

William Parkland
Judy Wahansson

Jon K. Borch

Michael E. Cook

John Barnes
Carl Keene

Tom Brown
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John D. Wemple
Ron Vichle

Emilio Yellowowl

Rory R. Johns

Bill H. Brunters

Gregory A. Young

Douglas E. Mock

Bill Roberts

PAUL SKATHAM

Mark T. Nelson.

Aaron J. Jackson

John M. Johnson

January 17, 2007

Joint Appropriations Subcommittee for Health and Human Services
Rep. Edith Clark, Chair

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

As a long term forensic patient at Montana State Hospital, I'm opposed to Senate Bill 149.

I oppose the joining of MSH mental patients and Department of Corrections inmates being housed under one roof. The prisoners are much more volatile, disruptive and dangerous to be around.

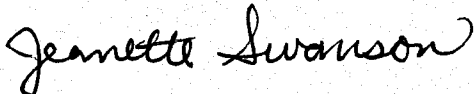
I also oppose the building change. The living situation proposed for the refurbishing of the former Xanthapoulos building appears to me to be punitive, barbaric, and jail-like, rather than one conducive to a rehabilitative atmosphere that is now available presently at Montana State Hospital.

I am currently in the open unit of RCU for higher level forensic mental patients. Under Senate Bill 149, I will no longer have any of my current privileges. Living in the Xanthapoulos building will be like living a jail-cell incarceration.

What I do support is the BIHF plan suggested by Anita Roesman of the Montana Advocacy Program. It's a rehabilitative plan for forensic mental patients rather than the punitive Step plan of Senate Bill 149.

Thank You for your time in reading my letter,
Yours truly,

Janette Swanson

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janette Swanson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

January 16, 2007

Joint Appropriations Subcommittee for Health and Human Services
Rep. Edith Clark, Chair

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

I was arrested in Missoula on September 9, 2001. I languished in the Missoula County Jail until I was remanded to Warm Springs in September 2002, on a not guilty due to mental illness decision by the court.

I'll remain at Warm Springs until the Board of Review determines that I'm no longer a threat to others or myself. If the judge concurs, I must remain in Montana cooperating completely with mental health services for the following five years. Any failure to do so on my part will cause my return to the hospital.

If the judge disagrees with the board's recommendation, I must wait a minimum of one full year to petition the court for my freedom once again and each year thereafter.

Since being at Warm Springs, I'm so grateful not to be in jail or prison. Because of my medication and the skills I've acquired from the classes I have attended, I've suffered minimally from either end of my bi-polar pendulum. In addition to those classes, I have also had classes that are designed to make me examine my attitudes and beliefs, that have made my conflict with the law and society at large inevitable.

The truth is I've benefitted significantly from my stay here. Presently, I reside on a unit known as RCU. It is an open unit, and a patient earns the privilege of living there by gaining the trust of his treatment team and the staff he interacts with. It's the best, and safest place I've lived since my incarceration, now more than five years ago.

Like the other forensic patients I've talked to; particularly those that previously lived at the Xanthopoulos building, I dread the thought that I might be one of the ones herded into that environment. Regardless of my individual fate, I pity the patients who must endure living there if Senate Bill 149 passes into law.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Winkler". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Robert Winkler

1-15-07

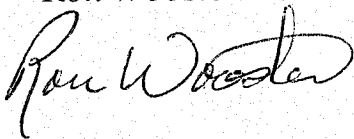
To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in regards to the proposed changes at the Montana State Hospital. My views, feelings and concerns are as follows.

It is my personal opinion that the proposed changes for Forensic residents would be a detrimental step backwards for productive treatment. I am currently residing at the Receiving Hospital on B-Ward. This unit is currently an open ward with a combination of Civil and Forensic residents. Just being on an open unit has many plusses. It gives a person a feeling of accomplishment and self-reliance that is absent on a locked unit. Because of the level of functioning that is required to be on this unit, there has been no incidents of violence, since the units opening, a year and four months ago. This ward does provide a safe and productive treatment area. It also provides faster release into the community, because a person has to display a higher level of responsibility and trust to live on this unit. The courts and Judges are much more receptive to discharging a resident from the hospital, who has lived on this unit productively and successfully for a period of time. When an environment of safety and being less restrictive in nature, is provided for an individual who is stabilized on medication and has an adequate level of being responsible and trustworthy, the results are a dramatic positive influence on the individual and the concerns of the presiding court. Having lived on the XTF unit myself, I know from personal experience that going back into that environment would be a definite step in the wrong direction for the Forensic residents at the Montana State Hospital.

Sincerely,

Ron Wooster



Joint Appropriations Subcommittee for Health and Human
Services

Rep. Edith Clark, chair

Attention: Charlie McCarthy
P. O. Box 1681
Helena, MT 59624

I am writing in regards to the proposed changes at Mt. State Hospital. I have been at the hospital for fourteen years in the Forensic program. Upon my admittance I lived in the Xanthopoulos Building and was there for eight years.

When the new hospital was built I moved to the Forensic unit and lived there for six years. I now live on an open unit at RCU. This unit is for patients who function at a higher level and who can be trusted.

I cannot conceive of the thought of taking ten steps backward to again live on the Xanthopoulos building. It is primitive at best. There is only one bathroom per hall with no adjustable shower handles. There are only two washing machines for the whole building. There is no PA system. If the riot that occurred on the D unit had happened at the Xanthopoulos building chances are someone would have been killed.

I can't express enough how depressing the building was. I'm so thankful not to be there anymore and hope that I never have to go back. Let's move forward, not back.

Sincerely,

Sharyle Elllison, MSH

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MONTANA ADVOCACY PROGRAM

1/15/2007

Joint Appropriations Subcommittee For Health and Human Services
Rep. Edith Clark, Chair

Madam chair and Members of the Committee,

I have concerns regarding availability of community services for mentally ill patients, as I am a patient at MSH.

I am worried when I get out of the hospital as to whether I will be able to get medication and support to continue my healthy lifestyle.

I have been helped through hospitalization at MSH, thank you for your support of programs at MSH. I accept responsibility for my past and my future. My mental Health will be best served with, I believe, the community based help, not institutions such as prison. Therefore, I am requesting more and better community based care facilities, especially about our decision concerning Bill 129.

Thank you for your valued time and consideration.

Sincerely I remain,

Earl R. Johnston

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